Department of Commerce
Safety Report

Safety Report

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at http://ohrm.gov/safetyprogram. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose for March through May 2002. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Office of Workers' Compensation for April 2002, an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts, and follow-up reports on several of the injuries reported. Section Four, Survey Results, is new and will be a continuing section in upcoming safety reports. This section provides April and May results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program web site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Resources: A selection was made for the new Department Safety Manager. The selectee, Dr. Tony Pierpoint, comes to the Department from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) where he served as an Environmental Specialist in the Environmental Compliance and Safety Division. Dr. Pierpoint has fifteen years of experience in the safety and health field. He has a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Chemistry, and Master's and Doctoral degrees in Civil Engineering, and is a Board Certified Industrial Hygienist. He held Senior Industrial Hygiene positions in both the Federal and private sectors, and has a broad background in managing safety, health and environmental programs.

Safety Council: The regularly scheduled Safety Council meetings were held on April 4 and May 2, 2002. The meetings included an explanation of the change in accident reporting in the monthly safety reports to Total Reportable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) and a report on the proposed outsourcing of the Workers' Compensation Program. Following the April meeting, it was decided that bureau Safety Officers would present key features of their safety programs at monthly meetings. The first such presentation, conducted at the May meeting, was an overview of the NOAA Environmental Compliance and Safety Assessment Program (NECSAS). NECSAS is a systems approach to identifying and managing environmental compliance and safety inspection information. The purpose of the system is to provide timely and quality compliance assistance services to facilities. NOAA has been utilizing the system for approximately four years, with great success.

Safety Program Action Plan: We continue to make progress on the Safety Program Action Plan approved by the Deputy Secretary in February. The plan is posted on the new OSH Program web site. The four workgroups, which were established to address key components of the proposed Action Plan, continued to work aggressively to identify and implement key initiatives. The goals and activities of each workgroup are listed below. Each group reported its progress at the April and May Safety Council meetings.

Inspections and Self-Assessment Workgroup - This workgroup is developing a Department-wide methodology for supervisors to conduct safety self-assessments and train safety professionals to complete annual workplace inspections. They are examining the potential application of the NECSAS program to DOC facilities, as well as other internal tools that may be used.

Communications and Training Policy Workgroup - This workgroup is developing safety awareness and training tools for employees and supervisors. The workgroup is currently developing a safety poster titled, "Safety Is Priority One." The poster includes a statement from the Secretary that expresses the importance and value placed on the safety and well-being of DOC employees. The poster will be printed and widely distributed to the bureaus. In addition, the workgroup is developing an insert, which also includes the Secretary's message, for pay statements. Other workgroup activities include development of web-based training programs and videos.

Reporting Workgroup - This workgroup is addressing the challenging task of developing a web-based system to report accidents which will be more comprehensive than the Workers' Compensation system. The workgroup is evaluating a number of commercial systems. In addition, the Department of Labor (DOL) is developing their own electronic claims submission system. The workgroup is examining integrating additional incident reporting requirements into the DOL system. In addition, the Department of Treasury developed an injury tracking system and is making plans to improve it. The workgroup has viewed the system and is considering a partnership with Treasury to utilize the system at DOC.

Health Units Workgroup - This workgroup is assessing the effectiveness of Department Health Units and developing Departmental policy regarding on-site health and occupational safety services. To compare services, workgroup members toured other Federal health units, including units at the Department of Agriculture, General Accounting Office, and Army Corps of Engineers. A formal list of recommendations and guidance is being developed, and should be completed in September.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

This information is available on the DOC intranet at:

http://home.osec.doc.gov/ohrm/maysafetyreport.pdf

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

In previous Safety Reports, we provided information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzed the types of injuries across the Department to determine the prevalence of such injuries.

The information below is updated using March and April 2002 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records. At the present time, Workers' Compensation Program records continue to afford the most comprehensive evidence regarding workplace safety.

Total Recordable Cases Incidence Rate: To enable comparison with private industry, we are now using the OSHA "Total Recordable Cases Incidence Rate (TRCIR)" formula as our measure of injuries rather than determining the injury rate per 100 employees. The TRCIR formula divides the number of accidents by the actual hours worked in the organization and multiplies that figure by 200,000, an approximation of potential hours worked for 100 employees. In determining the total hours worked for an organization, we multiplied the number of employees by 1800 hours. A full-time employee can technically work 2087 hours per year if he or she takes no leave. However, given that the average age of our workforce is 46.93 years and the average years of service is 12.8, we imputed the average annual leave accrual rate as seven hours[1]. Based on a seven hour annual leave accrual rate, we then estimated that each employee annually uses approximately 280 hours of combined annual, sick, and administrative leave. We subtracted that total from 2087 and rounded down to 1800. Using this formula, we updated injury rates from FY98 to the present and now depict them as total recordable case incidence rates (TRCIR)[2].
Major findings include:

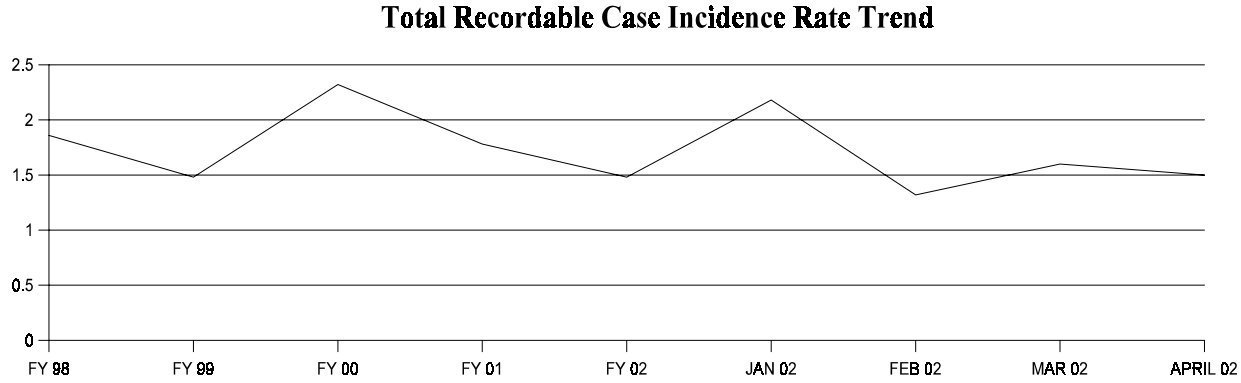
[1] An employee with three years of service earns six hours of annual leave per pay period. An employee with 15 years of service earns eight hours per pay period. All full-time employees earn four hours of sick leave per pay period. There are typically 26 pay periods in a leave year.

[2] **Please note:** The Total Recordable Cases Incidence Rates (TRCIRs) for FY02 presented in this table have been "annualized" based on October 2001 through February 2002 information. To accomplish this "annualization," we took the injuries for the first seven months of FY02, multiplied these numbers by 1.7, and applied the TRCIR formula. This process enabled us to compute a projected annual TRCIR for each bureau, and for the Department. Our assumption, which may or may not be valid, is that TRCIRs will remain somewhat constant over the course of the year. As we prepare new reports, we will incorporate updated statistical data and modify the projected "annualized" rates accordingly.

- **The FY02 TRCIR continues to decline when compared to FY01 and FY00 data.** Although the data may not yet be complete, the ***annualized*** FY02 TRCIR is projected at 1.7, based on data from October 2001 through April 2002. The January 2002 TRCIR was 2.18 while the March and April figures were 1.60 and 1.50, respectively. If these figures do not change, the TRCIR will be lower than for FY01 (1.78) or FY00 (2.32) as shown in chart one.

Chart 1

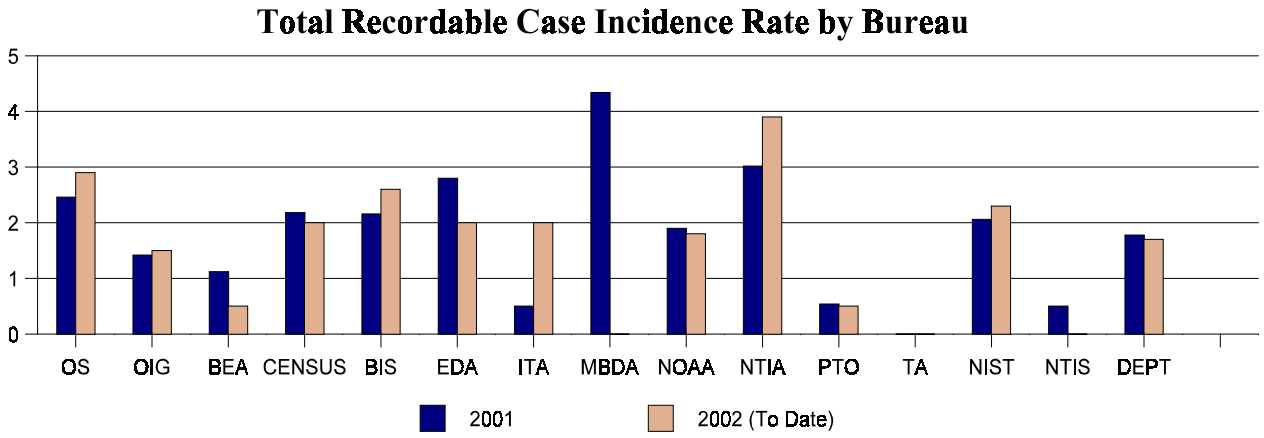
1. **Of the larger bureaus, the International Trade Administration (ITA) TRCIR (2.0)**



remains significantly higher than prior years (see table 1), with a number of injuries resulting from slips or falls. The TRCIR for the Office of the Secretary (OS) increased because of employee exposure to irradiated mail. The National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) rate is also slightly up from FY01, but down from previous years.

- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Office of Inspector General (OIG), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) will have higher annual TRCIRs for FY02 than FY01 if injury statistics remain constant.** The increases in OIG's monthly and annualized TRCIRs are based on one injury. Even with the 9.52 TRCIR for January, OIG's annualized rate is 1.6 versus the FY01 rate of 1.42. NTIA has five reported injuries resulting from falls or running into objects. BIS is slightly up with six cases reported. The TRCIR for the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is down substantially from last year, and the National Technical Information Service's rate is also down from previous years, with no injuries reported thus far.

Types of Injuries: Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 3 and 4, and tables 2



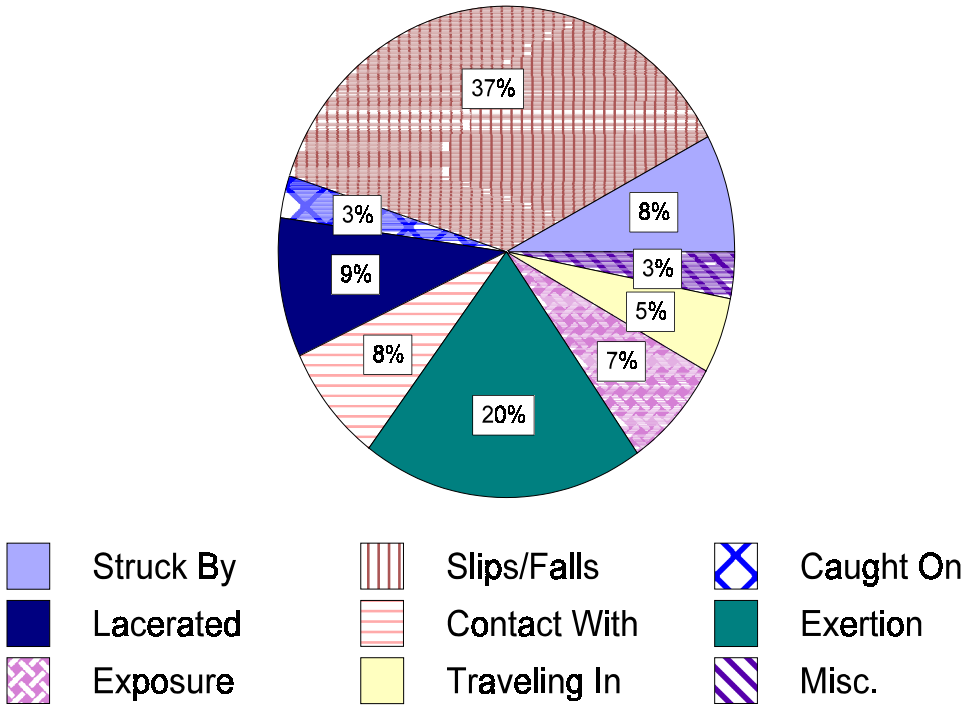
and 2A. We did not project findings for the remainder of FY02. Key findings are explained below:

Chart 2

- **"Slips/Falls" continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** "Slips/falls" accounted for 35 percent of all injuries within the Department from FY00 through December 2001. From October 2001 through April 2002, that percentage remained essentially constant at 37 percent of total injuries. Injuries due to "slips/falls" were 40 percent of total injuries for April 2002. The percentage of total injuries for exposure is 7 percent for FY02. No exposure injuries were reported for April 2002, suggesting that modifications to the irradiation process have reduced or eliminated the problems caused initially.

- **"Exertion" injuries remain second in frequency for FY02 followed by "Exposure" injuries.** "Exertion" injuries are 20 percent of total injuries for FY02 and the month of April. The OSH Program is developing guidance on ergonomics and lifting techniques to address those types of injuries.

Chart 3



Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for

FY02 Through April 2002

Chart 4

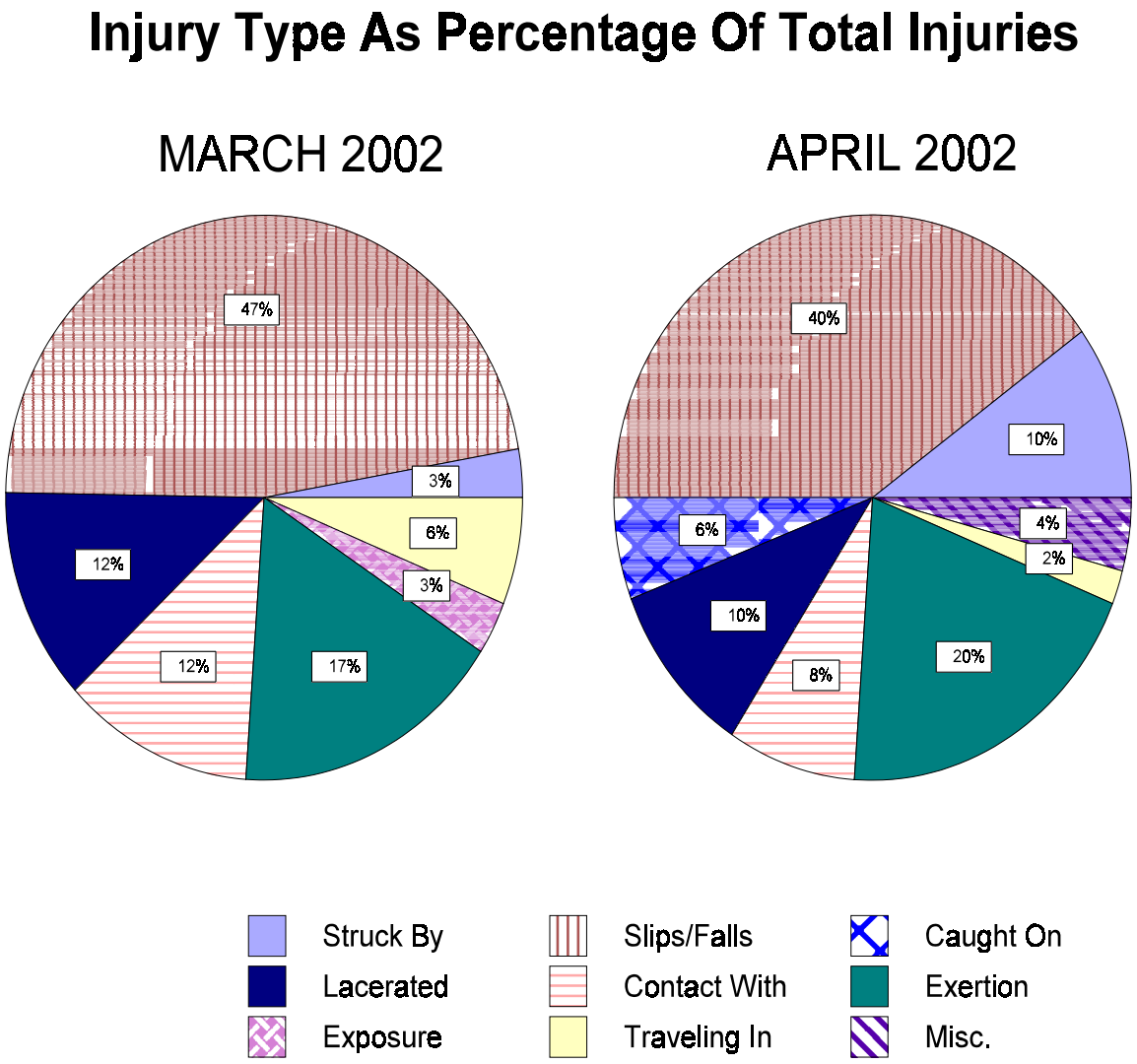

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries
MARCH 2002
APRIL 2002
47%
3%
6%
3%
12%
12%
17%
40%
10%
6%
4%
2%
10%
8%
20%
Struck By
Lacerated
Exposure
Slips/Falls
Contact With
Traveling In
Caught On
Exertion
Misc.

Table 1

TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		February 2002		March 2002		April 2002		FY 2002 (To Date)		
															Actual	Annualized	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.6	19	2.2*	34	3.82	22	2.46	1	1.48	0	0	1	1.3	15	26	2.9
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	5	3.72	2	1.42	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1.6
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.74	4	0.9	1	0.2	5	1.12	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0.5
Bureau of the Census	282	1.32	311	1.02	383	2.82	357	2.18	18	1.88	19	1.99	24	2.3	146	250	2.0
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.0	11	3.06	15	4.06	8	2.16	0	0	1	3.39	0	0	6	10	2.6
Economic Development Administration	4	1.7	9	3.66	4	1.68	5	2.8	0	0	1	5.2	0	0	3	5	2.0
International Trade Administration	26	1.32	18	.9	24	1.22	10	.5	0	0	4	3.4	1	0.8	18	31	2.0
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.12	1	1.1	3	3.4	4	4.34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	306	2.66	216	1.9	9	1.0	17	1.86	15	1.5	128	219	1.8
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.2	2	0.9	2	0.8	7	3.02	1	5.24	2	10.49	1	4.7	6	10	3.9
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.7	27	0.5	29	0.5	31	0.5	2	0.4	2	0.4	3	0.5	18	31	0.5
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.56	84	2.86	80	2.86	60	2.06	8	3.34	1	0.4	5	1.9	42	72	2.3
National Technical Information Service	2	0.6	6	2.6	4	2.14	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.86	811	1.48	890	2.32	728	1.78	39	1.32	47	1.60	50	1.5	384	658	1.7
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.42	890	11.32	4798	6.65	32	13.33	N/A	N/A							

Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through April 2002)

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	
Struck By/Against An Object	42	24	13	54	56	12	17	16	0	4	6	4	1	1	0	0	5	0	255
Falls/Slips	83	72	38	96	153	67	17	19	18	11	13	7	13	5	7	9	10	0	638
Caught On An Object	6	4	3	8	9	5	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	43
Cuts/Bites	29	20	13	55	36	15	15	12	4	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	2	208
Contact With An Object	23	13	9	49	24	8	8	1	3	5	6	4	1	1	2	0	1	0	158
Exertion/ Motion	75	64	38	99	54	25	15	7	8	8	3	1	4	1	2	6	3	1	414
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	29	13	6	12	7	2	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	18	0	11	113
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	4	8	3	10	9	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	42
Miscellaneous*	15	2	0	7	8	3	2	1	5	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	48
TOTAL**	306	216	128	383	357	146	80	60	42	29	31	18	24	10	18	34	22	15	1919

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stoke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through April 2002)

Bureau	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	**00**	**01**	**02**	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	5	0	1	13
Falls/Slips	4	2	0	1	2	1	2	4	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	3	3	3	3	0	6	6	0	47
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	8
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	1	8
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Miscellaneous*	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	5	2	1	1	5	1	4	5	3	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	7	6	3	4	0	15	8	6	83

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stoke.

Section Four: Survey Results

This information is available on the DOC intranet at:
http://home.osec.doc.gov/ohrm/maysafetyreport.pdf